

# State Behavior During the Ukrainian Crisis: The Perspectives of Romania, France, and the United States

A Monograph

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## **Abstract**

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Why has the Western community reacted inconsistently towards the Ukrainian crisis? This is a legitimate question to understand the contemporary global environment. This monograph argues that a state's reaction towards a crisis is a function of multiple variables. Despite embracing the same liberal democratic values and principles, the states have behaved according to a peculiar pattern. The states' reactions depend on the geographical proximity to the crisis, the cultural-historical connectivity with involved actors, the actors' economic interdependence, and national interests and preferences.

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## **Acronyms**

AA	Association Agreement
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EU	European Union
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ENP	European Neighborhood Partnership
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## Introduction

Whatever you do will be insignificant, but it is very important that you do it.

—Mahatma Gandhi

Policymakers turn to history when they are unsure of how to proceed. As Western leaders determine how best to respond to Russia's actions in the Ukraine, one historical episode may stand out among all others: Munich. When considering Central Eastern Europe, it is hard to ignore British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's infamous 1938 words about the Czechoslovakian crisis: "a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing."<sup>1</sup>

Few foreign policy failures reverberate more in the minds of Western elites than the fateful attempt to appease Nazi Germany. Whether or not Munich invalidated accommodation as a foreign policy tool, Western leaders undoubtedly are keen to avoid "appeaser" criticisms. The primary lesson of Munich seems clear: conceding to a resurgent and revisionist state's demands for a "peace in our time" is similar to endorsing and emboldening those who should properly be deterred, contained, reformed, or removed from power. In the words of Winston Churchill, "an appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last."<sup>2</sup>

This monograph seeks to evaluate why countries that share similar values and norms reacted differently towards the Ukrainian crisis and conveyed an apparent lack of cohesion and coherency for a common strategy. It argues that the state's behavior towards a crisis is a function of multiple variables. Despite embracing liberal and democratic values and principles, the states have behaved according to a peculiar pattern. The states' reactions are dependent on the geographical proximity to the crisis, the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine Crisis: What It Means for the West* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), 205.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Harris, "Munich's Lessons for the Ukraine Crisis," *The National Interest*, March 5, 2014, accessed February 28, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/munichs-lessons-the-ukraine-crisis-9998>.



cultural-historical connectivity with involved actors, actors' economic interdependence, and national interests and preference.

2014 was definitely Ukraine's year on the international stage. Many international relations pundits have evaluated their power politics theories by analyzing the Ukrainian crisis. Some of them based their explanations on the "resurgence, revisionism and assertiveness" of a new Russia and its "evil nature of leadership."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there are also supporters of a "shared guilt" for the crisis between Russia and Western powers.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, some scholars blame the West for the Ukrainian situation, citing their search for new economic markets and attempt to increase their areas of influence and control.<sup>5</sup> Hence, Western commentary reveals different perspectives on the Ukrainian crisis, highlighting the complexity of this event.

Similar to the 1938 Czechoslovakian crisis, the Ukrainian crisis with Russia will shape the future of Europe at a time when Europe faces many challenges, including the financial and Euro crisis, Greek economic problem, terrorism, and refugee crisis.<sup>6</sup> In March 2014, the former President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, commented on the Ukrainian crisis, stating "the world would never be as before."<sup>7</sup> His statement questions the European Security Strategy that underlines the non-negotiable principles of sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and peaceful settlement of disputes in the

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<sup>3</sup> Ivan Krastev, "Russian Revisionism," *Foreign Affairs*, March 3, 2014, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-03-03/russian-revisionism>.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen F. Cohen, "The Ukrainian Crisis - It's Not All Putin's Fault," *The Commonwealth Club*, accessed February 28, 2016, <http://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/archive/podcast/stephen-f-cohen-ukrainian-crisis-its-not-all-putins-fault>.

<sup>5</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine Crisis Is the West's Fault," *Foreign Affairs*, August 18, 2014, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>.

<sup>6</sup> "Why Should Europe Care What Happens between Ukraine and Russia?," *Debating Europe, Security*, May 2, 2014, accessed February 28, 2016, [http://www.debatingeurope.eu/2014/05/02/ukraine-russia/#.Vr-XOG\\_2YzE](http://www.debatingeurope.eu/2014/05/02/ukraine-russia/#.Vr-XOG_2YzE).

<sup>7</sup> "Brussels Forum 2014: A Conversation with Herman Van Rompuy," *The German Marshall Fund Of The United States*, March 21, 2015, accessed February 28, 2016, <http://brussels.gmfus.org/videos/brussels-forum-2014-conversation-herman-van-rompuy>.

international community.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, according to Professor Andrew Wilson, a scholar in Ukrainian Studies at University College London, the European Union's (EU) behavior was one that carries on as if nothing had happened.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the United States (US) President Barack Obama warned that any violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity would destabilize the international system and that "there will be costs" for any military intervention. Moreover, the US President pledged support for the new Ukrainian government in its effort to preserve its unity, sovereignty, and democratic future.<sup>10</sup> However, Professor Sten Rynning, the Danish president of the Nordic International Studies Association, asserts that these Western statements are "false hopes" based on the harsh reality that Ukraine lost part of its territory and is a victim of Russian hybrid warfare.<sup>11</sup>

According to Phil Haun, military professor of Strategy and Policy at US Naval War College, the possible options for Western behavior include strategies such as accommodation, appeasement, coercion, or confrontation.<sup>12</sup> Put differently, the options are the diplomatic approach, coercive measures, the military option, and a "do nothing" strategy. All of the strategies have specific inputs from the domestic and international dynamics, strategic decision making, and political leaders.

There are different theories to approach and understand the Ukrainian crisis. At a broad scale, structural realism, institutional liberalism, and nationalism might address this geopolitical conflict. Other

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<sup>8</sup> *European Security Strategy* (Foreign and Security Policy Defence - EU bookshop, 2009), accessed April 1, 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2860/1402>.

<sup>9</sup> Wilson, 1.

<sup>10</sup> "Statement by the US President on Ukraine," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, July 28, 2015, accessed February 28, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/28/statement-president-ukraine>.

<sup>11</sup> Sten Rynning, "The False Promise of Continental Concert: Russia, the West and the Necessary Balance of Power," *International Affairs*, 91 (2015), accessed March 19, 2016, [https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field\\_document/INTA91\\_3\\_05\\_Rynning.pdf](https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/INTA91_3_05_Rynning.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Phil M Haun, *Coercion, Survival, and War: Why Weak States Resist the United States* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015), xx.

useful theories include Stephen Walt's balance of threat, Phil Haun's rational coercion model, Andrew Moravcsik's three level analysis with an emphasis on economic interdependence and national preferences, and Robert Jervis's spiral and deterrence theory. No single theory can explain the complexity of the Ukrainian crisis, but a multi-theoretical perspective offers the best tool to understand the states' behavior during the Ukrainian crisis.

### **Methodology**

The selection of the United States, France, and Romania as case studies is based on each state's position on the relative power spectrum and geographical distance to the conflict. Hence, the case studies comprise a global power, a second level power, and a minor or regional power. According to the last ranking of the Davos World Economic Forum, Russia is the second most powerful country in the world.<sup>13</sup> There is only one option for a power to balance Russia, the United States, which is "the most powerful nation on Earth" in the words of the President Obama.<sup>14</sup> Due to the location of the crisis and the major power category, the second case should belong to a European power, France, assessed to be the crucible of Europe.<sup>15</sup> For the last selection, Romania's recent integration into the Western community and the geographic proximity to Ukraine makes it an appropriate choice.

Regarding the variables used in my argument, geographic proximity refers to the distance that lies between the potential competitors. Hence, the greater the distance, the more limited "the ability to project

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<sup>13</sup> Tom Porter, "Davos 2016: Russia Is 'Second Most Powerful Country in the World' As Us Tops List," *International Business Times*, January 22, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/davos-2016-russia-second-most-powerful-country-world-us-tops-list-1539558>.

<sup>14</sup> "Remarks of President Barack Obama – State of The Union Address as Delivered," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, January 13, 2016, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/01/12/remarks-president-barack-obama-%E2%80%93-prepared-delivery-state-union-address>.

<sup>15</sup> Ross Douthat, "France, The Crucible of Europe," *The New York Times*, January 22, 2015, accessed March 1, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/opinion/sunday/ross-douthat-france-the-crucible-of-europe.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/opinion/sunday/ross-douthat-france-the-crucible-of-europe.html?_r=0).

power,” and the more limited the potential threat.<sup>16</sup> Applied to my argument, states neighboring Ukraine should have a stronger inclination for coercion and international intervention.

Economic interdependence is the degree to which two or more actors are mutually dependent and connected by some form of economic activity.<sup>17</sup> Liberals argue that the benefits of trade give states an incentive to stay peaceful so “if trade crosses borders, soldiers won’t.”<sup>18</sup> Realists contend that trade compels states to struggle for vital raw materials and markets.<sup>19</sup> Considering the first two variables, this leads to a paradox: on one hand, geographic proximity intensifies conflict, but on the other geographic proximity leads to economic trade that diminishes conflict. Hence, trade and geographic proximity interact to determine the level of international conflict and cooperation.<sup>20</sup> As for my research, the states most economic integrated with Russia turned to be more reluctant to coerce or confront the trade partner no matter of its international violations.

Cultural-historical connectivity focuses on the relations between the analyzed state with Ukraine and the Russian Federation. Historical events create unique ties. The cultural aspect involves the civilization and the strategic culture providing the tendency in behavior. According to Jack Snyder, the

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<sup>16</sup> Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 23.

<sup>17</sup> “The global economy and interdependence,” *Center for Global Geography Education*, last modified September 14, 2011, accessed March 1, 2016, [http://cgge.aag.org/GlobalEconomy1e/ConceptualFramework\\_Jan10/ConceptualFramework\\_Jan106.html](http://cgge.aag.org/GlobalEconomy1e/ConceptualFramework_Jan10/ConceptualFramework_Jan106.html).

<sup>18</sup> Edward D. Mansfield and Brian M. Pollins, “Economic Interdependence and International Conflict: New Perspectives on an Enduring Debate,” *Foreign Affairs*, January 28, 2009, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/2004-05-01/economic-interdependence-and-international-conflict-new>.

<sup>19</sup> Dale C. Copeland, *Economic Interdependence and War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 1.

<sup>20</sup> John Robst, Solomon Polachek, and Yuan-Ching Chang, “Geographic Proximity, Trade And International Conflict/Cooperation,” *Institute for the Study of Labor – Discussion Paper*, no. 1988, 2006, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://repec.iza.org/dp1988.pdf>.

strategic culture is the sum of ideals, conditional emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behavior.<sup>21</sup> Applied to my argument, greater historic ties and cultural similarities will drive a state's appeasement or accommodation approaches.

The last variable represents a state's national interests and preferences. The realist concept of national interest is an elusive concept describing the aspiration and goals of a sovereign state.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, the liberal concept of national preference forms at the domestic level by political interaction and affects the state's external behavior in terms of negotiation and integration.<sup>23</sup> However, the differences between interests and preferences are that the former emerges from the state's capabilities, geostrategic location, and resources and the latter emerges after a domestic negotiation of the major players. Hence, the greater the potential for a state's national interests and preferences to be affected by the outcome of a conflict, the more likely they are to drive the state's actions attitude towards the crisis.

### **Strategic Background**

In the 1990s, US President George H. W. Bush hailed the new unipolar world order as “a world order in which the principles of justice and fair play protect the weak against the strong.”<sup>24</sup> The world had entered the post-Cold War era. The Western victory in the Cold War led Professor Francis Fukuyama to

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<sup>21</sup> Nayef Al-Rodhan, “Strategic Culture and Pragmatic National Interest,” *Global Policy Journal*, July 22, 2015, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/22/07/2015/strategic-culture-and-pragmatic-national-interest>.

<sup>22</sup> Donald E Nuechterlein, “National Interests and Foreign Policy: A Conceptual Framework for Analysis and Decision-Making,” *British Journal of International Studies* 2, no. 3 (October 1976), accessed March 1, 2016, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20096778?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](http://www.jstor.org/stable/20096778?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents), 10.2307/20096778.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Moravcsik et al., “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51, no. 4 (1997), accessed March 1, 2016, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/preferences.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Gerhard Peters, “George Bush: Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Cessation of the Persian Gulf Conflict,” *The American Presidency Project*, March 6, 1991, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=19364>.

declare “the end of history.”<sup>25</sup> The French concept of a whole and free Europe reemerged with “the common European home” concept proposed by the last Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) leader, Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>26</sup> However, a string of European conflicts after 1989 led Professor Robert Kagan to announce the return of history as the restart of new competition between great powers.<sup>27</sup>

The Ukrainian crisis has refocused attention on the geopolitical competition between the West (the United States and EU) and Russia.<sup>28</sup> Professor Wilson argues that the Ukrainian crisis represented both a Western and a Russian failure, as the West missed an opportunity to integrate Russia within the democratic world and Russia betrayed its own agreements with the international community.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Professor Walt posits that the Ukrainian crisis is purely a geopolitical crisis between the EU/United States and Russia reflecting the former’s inability to value the latter’s interests.<sup>30</sup>

According to a RAND study, Ukraine’s importance to Russia stems from its future strategic orientation and Russia’s long-term geostrategic orientation and political path. Without Ukraine, as Zbigniew Brzezinski has pointed out, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the economic

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<sup>25</sup> Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?,” *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, accessed March 4, 2016, <https://ps321.community.uaf.edu/files/2012/10/Fukuyama-End-of-history-article.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Mikhail Gorbachev, “The Common European Home,” *Pro Europa*, July 6, 1989, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://pro-europa.eu/index.php/en/library/the-struggle-for-the-union-of-europe/156-gorbachev,-mikhail-the-common-european-home>.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Kagan, “End of Dreams, Return of History,” *Hoover Institution*, July 17, 2007, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.hoover.org/research/end-dreams-return-history>.

<sup>28</sup> Maxime Lefebvre, “Russia and The West: Ten Disputes and an Inevitable Escalation?,” January 25, 2016, *Fondation Robert Schuman –The Research and Study Center on Europe*, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0379-russia-and-the-west-ten-disputes-and-an-inevitable-escalation>.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, 1.

<sup>30</sup> Philip Hamilton, “Professor Stephen Walt on the crisis in Ukraine,” *Boston Global Forum*, March 25, 2014, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://bostonglobalforum.org/2014/03/professor-stephen-walt-on-the-crisis-in-ukraine>.

<sup>31</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 46.

interdependence between Russia and Ukraine is crucial not only in the defense sector, but all aspects of the economy.<sup>32</sup>

2008 represented a tipping point for Western-Russian relations. The Bucharest North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit in April 2008 concluded by welcoming Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership. It also stated that "these countries will become members of NATO."<sup>33</sup> The Russian presidential administration changed in May 2008. Dmitry Medvedev replaced Vladimir Putin with the hope that time would heal the latter's Soviet nostalgia as "the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th century."<sup>34</sup> Moreover, many pundits hoped that the presidential change would repudiate President Putin's 2007 speech at the Munich Security when he condemned the unipolar US world and its hegemonic approach towards global affairs.<sup>35</sup> The Western hopes tied to the Russian presidential change dissipated with the five-day Georgia war in August 2008. Russia turned to brute force to dominate the South Ossetia and teach a lesson to its Georgian adversary. Condemned by most of the international community, Russia's actions demonstrated its resurgence.

In the United States, Barack Obama won the 2008 election on a platform that addressed the ongoing financial crisis and reduced interventionism. President Obama embraced multilateralism and

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen F. Larrabee, Peter A. Wilson, and John Gordon, *The Ukrainian Crisis and European Security: Implications for the United States and U.S. Army*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015), 3-5, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR900/RR903/RAND\\_RR903.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR900/RR903/RAND_RR903.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> "Bucharest Summit Declaration," *NATO Press Release*, April 3 2008, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_8443.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm).

<sup>34</sup> "Putin calls collapse of Soviet Union 'catastrophe'," *The Washington Times*, April 26, 2005, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/apr/26/20050426-120658-5687r/?page=all>.

<sup>35</sup> "Putin's prepared remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," *The Washington Post*, February 12, 2007, accessed April 1, 2016, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/02/12/AR2007021200555.html>.

institutionalism with an emphasis on diplomacy.<sup>36</sup> According to Professors Kim Holmes and James Carafano, Obama's foreign policy constituted an attempt to find a middle ground between aggressive interventionism and isolationism.<sup>37</sup> Following this so-called "Obama doctrine" in 2009, President Obama implemented the controversial "reset" policy towards Russia based on global common interests of mutual cooperation.<sup>38</sup> The "reset" downgraded the United States' commitments for Eastern Europeans eager for American protection.<sup>39</sup> In 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the "Asia's pivot" as one of the Obama Administration's central foreign policy initiatives for "re-balancing" US interests from Europe and the Middle East toward East Asia.<sup>40</sup>

Despite hopes of closer American-Russian collaboration, relations between the two countries experienced friction. Significant events that drove this friction included the 2010 spying scandal, 2011 Syrian civil war, Putin's reelection in 2012, human rights violations culminating with 2012 Sergei Magnitsky's bill, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) expulsion from the Russia Federation in 2012, the Russian ending of adoptions for American parents in 2012, and the 2013

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<sup>36</sup> Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs*, September 14, 2015, accessed March 4, 2016, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2007-07-01/renewing-american-leadership>.

<sup>37</sup> Kim R. Holmes, James J. Carafano, "Defining the Obama Doctrine, Its Pitfalls, and How to Avoid them," *The Heritage Foundation*, September 1, 2010, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2010/08/defining-the-obama-doctrine-its-pitfalls-and-how-to-avoid-them>.

<sup>38</sup> "U.S.-Russia Relations: "Reset" Fact Sheet," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, June 24, 2010, accessed March 4, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/us-russia-relations-reset-fact-sheet>.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, 9.

<sup>40</sup> Matt Schiavenza, "What Exactly Does It Mean That the U.S. Is Pivoting to Asia?," *The Atlantic*, April 15, 2013, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/04/what-exactly-does-it-mean-that-the-us-is-pivoting-to-asia/274936/>.



Edward Snowden case.<sup>41</sup>

On the other side of the Atlantic, the EU has continuously grown into a powerful superstate. However, it lacks military capabilities due to its dependency on the NATO security pillar, specifically the United States. Despite its economic strengths, Europe entered its deepest recession in 2009. The EU revealed its limits confronting the crisis because of financial issues, the lack of leadership, confidence, cohesiveness, nationalism, and its geographic overreach.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the refugee crisis presents the EU with a severe demographic problem.

Russia remains the EU's third biggest trading partner. Russian oil and gas make up a large proportion of its exports to Europe. The EU and Russian economies are interdependent, but Europe has a dependent relationship on Russian gas. The EU imports mostly raw materials from Russia and exports technology and finite products.<sup>43</sup>

According to Professor Andrew Wilson, EU politics have become more nationalistic, more populist, and more of a zero-sum game since 2008. Furthermore, the EU's Eastern strategy towards non-aligned states, such as Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Belarus, transformed the integration process within an area of engagement traditionally associated with Russia. As a response to the Georgia War and at the initiative of Eastern members, the EU re-initiated the Eastern Partnership program (EaP) in 2009, despite Russian opposition. The partnership focuses on integration of Eastern European nations with the EU over a long term. The integration has two lines of effort: an economic

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<sup>41</sup> Brad Plumer, "A Short Timeline of Deteriorating US-Russia Relations," *Washington Post*, August 8, 2013, accessed March 8, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/08/08/ten-reasons-the-u-s-and-russia-are-at-odds/>.

<sup>42</sup> "Growth. A deep recession," *European Commission-Economic and Financial Affairs*, last modified September 2, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://ec.europa.eu/economy\\_finance/explained/hot\\_economic\\_topics/growth/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/explained/hot_economic_topics/growth/index_en.htm).

<sup>43</sup> "EU Relations with Russia," *European External Action Strategy*, March 31, 2015, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/about/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/russia/about/index_en.htm).

effort to align the markets and a political effort to reform the politics. As an alternative to the EU, Russia developed the “Eurasia Union” focused on former Soviet countries.<sup>44</sup>

Caught in the middle, Ukraine was the most vulnerable country according to European Bank for Reconstruction and Development because of its limited financial reserves and lack of public support for reform. Sensitive to Russian gas prices, the Ukrainian economy was highly dependent on prices for its steel, mineral, and chemical sales. Additionally, Ukraine had forty percent of its banking assets owned by foreign banks, mainly Russian. Ukraine did not have a buffer provided by commodity economies like Russia, Kazakhstan, or Azerbaijan. The high number of Ukrainian migrant workers, trade relations, and foreign development investment reinforced the interconnectedness of the Ukrainian-Russian economies. Unlike most of its neighbors, Ukraine did not reorient its economic relationships towards the EU.<sup>45</sup>

The 2013 Vilnius EU Summit represents the starting point for the Ukrainian crisis. At that time, Ukraine’s political leadership suspended the EU’s Association Agreement (AA) and turned towards Russia. The Russian regime perceived the EU’s effort to drag Ukraine into its orbit as a threat to its vital interests. Conversely, Russia tried to keep Ukraine within its sphere of strategic interests to counterbalance NATO and the EU. As such, Ukraine walked away from the association process a week before the summit.<sup>46</sup>

The summit triggered a chain of events that led to an uprising in Ukraine, repression, Russian invasion, Crimea annexation, and conflict in Eastern Ukraine. The 21 November 2013 Ukrainian decision to back away from negotiations with the EU led to mass civic protests in central Kiev. The protests, labeled the “Euromaidan” movement, almost immediately turned into a permanent standoff on the

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<sup>44</sup> Wilson, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Nat Rudarakanchana et al., “Ukraine’s Relationship with Russia: What’s at Stake in Tug of War between the EU and Russia,” *International Business Times*, December 5, 2015, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/ukraines-relationship-russia-whats-stake-tug-war-between-eu-russia-1491610>.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Rettman, “Ukraine Pulls the Plug on EU Treaty,” *EU Observer*, November 21, 2013, accessed March 8, 2016, <https://euobserver.com/foreign/122190>.

capital's Independence Square. The protesters viewed the EU as the solution. Ukrainian nationalist groups, mainly from Western Ukraine, joined the Euromaidan, adding an adversarial posture to Russia. To them, President Viktor Yanukovych, an Eastern Ukrainian, was hijacking the country to merge with Russia.<sup>47</sup>

According to Professor Dmitri Trenin, the director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, Ukraine was not a foreign policy priority for President Obama. At the time, his administration was preoccupied with wars and revolutions in the Middle East, Iran's nuclear program, the US military drawdown in Afghanistan, relations with China, and developments in East Asia. However, the United States had long supported pro-Western democratic movements in Ukraine, for both ideological and geopolitical reasons, and it looked with a wary eye on the Kremlin's attempts at Eurasian integration. As a result, the administration assisted pro-Western opposition leaders, openly encouraging them in their efforts.<sup>48</sup>

In mid-February 2014, the situation in central Kiev degenerated into violence. It appeared that Yanukovych tried to win by using force to disperse the Euromaidan and its armed nationalist supporters called the Right Sector.<sup>49</sup> Under EU pressure, President Yanukovych stopped the police advance and opened talks with the opposition leaders. On 21 February 2014, Ukraine signed an agreement with opposition leaders mediated by the EU foreign ministers of France, Germany, and Poland. However, the

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<sup>47</sup> Shiv Malik, Aisha Gani, and Tom McCarthy, "Ukraine Crisis: Deal Signed in Effort to End Kiev Standoff," *The Guardian*, June 3, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/21/ukraine-crisis-president-claims-deal-with-opposition-after-77-killed-in-kiev>.

<sup>48</sup> Anne Gearan, "In Recording of US Diplomat, Blunt Talk on Ukraine," *Washington Post*, February 6, 2014, accessed March 19, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-purported-recording-of-us-diplomat-blunt-talk-on-ukraine/2014/02/06/518240a4-8f4b-11e3-84e1-27626c5ef5fb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-purported-recording-of-us-diplomat-blunt-talk-on-ukraine/2014/02/06/518240a4-8f4b-11e3-84e1-27626c5ef5fb_story.html).

<sup>49</sup> Julia Embody, "Beware Ukraine's Rising Right Sector," *The National Interest*, August 12, 2015, accessed March 19, 2016, <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/beware-ukraines-rising-right-sector-13558>.

Euromaidan movement rejected the deal and demanded Yanukovich's immediate resignation.

Yanukovich fled from Kiev to Russia and the Euromaidan revolution celebrated victory.<sup>50</sup>

Trenin insists that Euromaidan's success and the "presidential coup" altered Russia's previously defensive Ukraine policy. Refusing to recognize the new government, Russia sought to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO, ideally, to win back dominant influence within Ukraine. In pursuing its new, proactive approach, Russia had two main objectives. The first was to put Crimea off limits to the new post-Yanukovich authorities in Kiev. Using unconventional forces, Russia isolated the peninsula from mainland Ukraine, directed a referendum pertaining to Crimea's status, and pursued an all-out campaign in favor of Crimea's reunification with Russia. The vote, held on 16 March 2014, overwhelmingly endorsed such a union. On 18 March, the Russian Federation signed the Unification treaty to incorporate Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Moscow's second objective was to achieve a new federal settlement in Ukraine, which would forestall complete domination of the country by Kiev and make Western integration structurally impossible.<sup>51</sup>

Based on the Cold War's concept of escalation dominance, Kremlin actions have been multi-sectorial, such as putting pressure on the new authorities in Kiev, deterring Western intervention, and supporting Ukrainian Russophiles in East Ukraine. Once again, Russian unconventional forces roused an armed resistance movement in South East Ukraine. Disguised under nationalistic ambitions, the rebellion had goals of regional autonomy and secessionist ambitions as Novorossiia, or New Russia. In the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, the militants held regional referendums in early May 2014 and proclaimed their

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<sup>50</sup> Andrew Higgins and Andrew E. Kramer, "Archrival Is Freed as Ukraine Leader Flees," *The New York Times*, May 31, 2014, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/world/europe/ukraine.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/world/europe/ukraine.html?_r=0).

<sup>51</sup> Dmitri Trenin, "The Ukraine Crisis and the Resumption of Great-Power Rivalry," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, July, 2014, accessed March 4, 2016, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine\\_great\\_power\\_rivalry2014.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/ukraine_great_power_rivalry2014.pdf).

own “republics” independent from Kiev.<sup>52</sup>

Military confrontations have continued in East Ukraine since March 2014 despite the international negotiated ceasefire agreements and diplomatic negotiations. Moscow did not hide its sympathy and support for the separatists, but it refrained officially from either recognizing them or sending Russian forces to protect them. To deter Russian actions in Ukraine, the international community has imposed restrictive measures as diplomatic and economic measures, hoping that Russia would back down and end the conflict.<sup>53</sup>

### **Literature review**

The world’s complexity requires a multi-theoretical perspective to analyze state behavior during crises. This monograph utilizes three realist theories and one liberal theory that evaluate the states’ behavior in a crisis. First, this monograph uses the “balance of threat” theory of Stephen M. Walt, developed in *The Origins of Alliances*. The “balance of threat” theory refines Kenneth Waltz’s classical balance of power theory. According to the balance of threat theory, states’ behavior is determined by the threats they perceive from other states. Walt contends that states will generally balance by allying against a perceived threat, although very weak states are more likely to align with the rising threat in order to protect their own security. Walt identifies four criteria states use to evaluate the threat posed by another state: its aggregate strength (size, population, and economic capabilities), its geographic proximity, its offensive capabilities, and its offensive intentions. Walt argues that the more other states view a rising state as possessing these qualities, the more likely they are to view it as a threat and align against it.<sup>54</sup> Walt’s theory influenced adopting geographical proximity as a variable in this monograph.

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<sup>52</sup> Linda Kinstler, “Protesters in Eastern Ukraine Are Chanting ‘New Russia,’ an Old Term that’s Back in Vogue,” *New Republic*, April 7, 2014, accessed April 14, 2016, <https://newrepublic.com/article/117284/federalized-ukraine-could-mean-return-novorossiia>.

<sup>53</sup> Vincent L. Morelli, *Ukraine: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2016), 19-20, accessed March 29, 2016, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33460.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Walt, 22-26.

The second realist theory is Phil Haun's theory of asymmetric interstate coercion, articulated in *Coercion, Survival, and War: Why Weak States Resist the United States*. Haun argues that, based on power disparity, a state's behavior can include accommodation, appeasement, escalation or even war by adopting a coercive or brute force strategy. Accordingly, rational states will coerce only when they expect the targeted state would concede and not resist. In addition, states should understand that coercion strategy is likely to fail when demands threaten national interests or survival of the state, its regime, or its leaders.<sup>55</sup> The rational coercion theory underpins national interests as a variable in this monograph.

The third realist theory is Robert Jervis's theory of deterrence and spiral models. Jervis seeks to demonstrate that perceptions of the world determines, in detectable and understandable patterns, the state's behavior and its decision-making processes. His central premise is that great dangers arise if an aggressor perceives that the other powers are weak in capability, commitment, or credibility. Therefore, states often go to extremes because moderation or conciliation is perceived as weakness. On the other hand, the spiral model expresses the security dilemma, which asserts that since a state cannot determine whether another state's actions are aggressive, it assumes the worst and follows an escalation path.<sup>56</sup> Jervis's perception theory emphasizes cultural dimension and states' historical experience.

On the liberal side, Andrew Moravcsik's national preference theory, described in *The Choice for Europe: Social Purpose and State Power from Messina to Maastricht*, uses three levels of analysis: the domestic, supranational, and interstate. He argues that economic interdependence has been the primary force driving democracies into diplomatic relationships based on common interests. Formed at the domestic level, national preferences enhance a state's bargaining power by giving them the options of

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<sup>55</sup> Haun, 173-177.

<sup>56</sup> Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, 13th ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 268 – 278.

cooperation or integration.<sup>57</sup> Moravcsik's theory supports an approach using economic interdependence and national preference variables.

### **Romania Case Study**

Since 1989, Romania has slowly transitioned from communism to a liberal democracy, embracing Western values. Romania has pursued closer relations with the United States at the expense of European countries.<sup>58</sup> As one of the staunchest US allies in Europe, Romania has used its geostrategic position near the Black Sea region to promote stability and security.<sup>59</sup> In 2004, Romania received NATO membership. Joining NATO paved the way for Romania's 2007 inclusion in the EU. Touting common values and interests, Romania and the United States agreed in the 2011 Strategic Partnership to create NATO/ US infrastructure to support the Black Sea Rotational Force, the Anti-Ballistic Missile site, and the Mihail Kogalniceanu airbase.<sup>60</sup>

Romania's interests in Eastern European developments predates the crisis in Ukraine. In 2004, together with Germany, Romania launched the Black Sea Synergy project to bring regional countries closer to the EU through cooperation and reform in political and economic domains.<sup>61</sup> In 2009, EaP

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<sup>57</sup> Helen Wallace, James A. Caporaso, Fritz W. Schampf, Andrew Moravcsik, "Review section symposium: The choice for Europe: Social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht," *Journal of European Public Policy*, no. 6:1 (1999), accessed April 14, 2016, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/ejpp.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> John Pike, "Romania-US Relations," *Global Security*, last modified July 7, 2012, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/europe/ro-foreign-relations-us.htm>.

<sup>59</sup> "Romanian Security on Europe's Frontline," *Center for European Policy Analysis*, January 25, 2016, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://cepa.org/sites/default/files/RomSec.pdf>.

<sup>60</sup> "Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for The 21st Century between The United States of America and Romania," *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs-US Department of State*, September 13, 2011, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/or/172241.htm>.

<sup>61</sup> "Black Sea Synergy," *European External Action Strategy*, February 13, 2009, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu\\_russia/fields\\_cooperation/regional\\_issues/black\\_sea\\_synergy/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/russia/eu_russia/fields_cooperation/regional_issues/black_sea_synergy/index_en.htm).

replaced the Black Sea strategy as the EU's official strategy.<sup>62</sup> Despite being disappointed to see its own initiative overtaken, Romania supported EU initiatives in the region. It also backed NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine at the 2008 Bucharest summit. Therefore, Romania was disappointed by Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reject the AA with the EU in November 2013. From the Romanian perspective, the Ukrainian crisis impacted both the Black Sea regional stability and also the political future of Moldova, described as Romania's "sister country" by the former Romanian President Traian Basescu.<sup>63</sup>

The crisis in Ukraine resonated throughout Europe, evoking memories of the violence in Yugoslavia, the "frozen" conflicts of USSR's demise, and fears of gas interruptions. Unlike other European countries, Romania passively reacted to Euromaidan and did not send officials to Kiev's streets to show solidarity with the democratic Ukrainian cause.<sup>64</sup> President Traian Basescu argued that "Romania had a first fundamental project joining NATO, a second fundamental project joining the EU. The third one should be the union with Moldova." Furthermore, he stressed that "for the EU the big stake in Vilnius is Ukraine, but for Romania the big stake is Moldova."<sup>65</sup>

Romania's strategic aims include preserving the EU's Black Sea regional focus and EU membership for Moldova. Hence, the Romanian perspective towards Ukraine was ambivalent.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "EU Relations with Eastern Partnership," *European External Action Strategy*, October 20, 2014, accessed March 19, 2016, [http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern/about/index\\_en.htm](http://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern/about/index_en.htm).

<sup>63</sup> Dan Alexe, "Romania Makes its Mark as a Regional Player," *EU Observer*, November 8, 2010, accessed April 2, 2016, <https://euobserver.com/news/31218>.

<sup>64</sup> Mateusz Gniazdowski, "The Countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe on the Crisis in Ukraine," *Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich*, March 5, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/analyses/2014-03-05/countries-central-and-south-eastern-europe-crisis-ukraine>.

<sup>65</sup> Georgi Gotev, "Commission Regrets Basescu's 'Bigger Romania' Statements," *EurActiv*, December 2, 2013, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/commission-regrets-b-sescu-s-bigger-romania-statements/>.

<sup>66</sup> Adam Balcer, "The Eastern Partnership in The Black Sea Region: Towards a New Synergy," *Demos Europa-Center of European Strategy*, 2011, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://carleton.ca/ces/wp-content/uploads/Black-Sea-Region-and-the-Great-Energy-Game-in-Eurasia.pdf>.



Accordingly, Bucharest's behavior reflected the tenuous Romanian-Ukrainian relations.<sup>67</sup> Romania and Ukraine have maintained good relations even though they inherited territorial disputes after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. For almost two decades, the two countries disputed the Serpent Island in the Black Sea, the shelf adjacent to it, and the Danube transport corridor. The International Court of Justice solved the dispute in 2009 in Romania's favor.<sup>68</sup> Another source of tension has been the treatment of the ethnic Romanian minority in Ukraine. According to Romanian statistics, there are almost 500,000 ethnic Romanians in Ukraine. In order to protect the Ukrainian national identity, Kyiv's authorities have taken restrictive measures towards minorities, including Romanians. Restrictions include limited access to education, limited information and media in its native language, and limited political representation at regional and national levels.<sup>69</sup>

During the first part of the Ukrainian crisis, Romania limited its response to diplomatic statements by officials condemning the violence and lobbying for de-escalation. Romania repeatedly demanded the protection of human rights and fair treatment of ethnic minorities.<sup>70</sup> However, Romania reacted promptly to the violent repression of protesters, condemning the actions taken by the pro-Russian Ukrainian leaders. President Basescu condemned the violent response towards Euromaidan and encouraged the Ukrainian administration to find a peaceful and democratic solution. After Yanukovich's

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<sup>67</sup> Margarita Assenova, "Southeast Europe: Reactions to the Crisis in Ukraine," *The Jamestown Foundation*, December 8, 2015, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=42094&no\\_cache=1#.VtwRVG\\_2YzF](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42094&no_cache=1#.VtwRVG_2YzF).

<sup>68</sup> "Maritime Delimitation in the Black Sea (Romania v. Ukraine)," *International Court of Justice Press Release*, Report No. 2009/9, February 3, 2009, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/132/14985.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> "Romanian-Ukrainian Bilateral Relations," *Romanian Ministry Of Foreign Affairs Reference Domains*, last modified January 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.mae.ro/bilateral-relations/1734>.

<sup>70</sup> Dragos Dinu and Octavian Milevski, "Strengthening Cooperation On The Romanian Minority Issue In Post-Euromaidan Ukraine," *Romanian Center for European Policies*, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.crpe.ro/en/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Policy-Brief-38-Romania-Ukraine-Cooperation-on-minority-issue-post-Euromaidan.pdf>.

flight to Russia, Romania responded more publicly to all consequent events, condemning Russia's annexation of Crimea and subsequent actions through presidential statements and press releases.<sup>71</sup>

Despite the conflict in East Ukraine, Romania continues to express concern about the treatment of minorities while supporting the country's territorial integrity by not recognizing the Russian annexation of Crimea. Romania has historically condemned acts of separatism. This constant preoccupation, dictated by the domestic and regional contexts, did not impede the development of good relations with the post-Yanukovich government. In line with the EU and United States, Romania declared the Crimean referendum illegal and invalid. Romanian President Basescu argued that "a referendum organized under the threat of military occupation cannot live up to democratic standards and will not be legitimated by the international community."<sup>72</sup>

Since February 2014, Romanian leaders have met with their new Ukrainian counterparts several times, seeking to develop bilateral relations and to assist Ukraine in its transition through official bilateral meetings. The use of unconventional forces for secessionist ambitions in East Ukraine provoked a more vocal Romanian response. Romania encouraged the signatories of the Budapest Memorandum to honor their commitments, which guaranteed Ukrainian territorial integrity.<sup>73</sup> Romania remains vocal in its condemnation of Russia's destabilizing actions in the region by political public pronouncements.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> "Romanian President Traian Basescu Statement about violent escalation in Kiev," *Romanian Presidency Press Release*, February 19, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?\\_RID=det&tb=date\\_arhiva&id=15236&\\_PRID=arh](http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?_RID=det&tb=date_arhiva&id=15236&_PRID=arh).

<sup>72</sup> Marian Chiriac, "Romania Backs EU Sanctions against Russia," *BalkanInsight*, March 18, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/tense-situation-in-ukraine-worries-neighboring-romania>.

<sup>73</sup> "Romanian President Traian Basescu Statement about Crimean situation," *Romanian Presidency Press Release*, February 28, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?\\_RID=det&tb=date\\_arhiva&id=15255&\\_PRID=arh](http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?_RID=det&tb=date_arhiva&id=15255&_PRID=arh).

<sup>74</sup> "Romanian President Traian Basescu Statement about Ukrainian crisis," *Romanian Presidency Press Release*, May 13, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, [http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?\\_RID=det&tb=date\\_arhiva&id=15430&\\_PRID=arh](http://old.presidency.ro/index.php?_RID=det&tb=date_arhiva&id=15430&_PRID=arh).

Romania implemented all sanctions imposed by the EU against Russia following Russia's seizure of Crimea. Moreover, Romania announced unconditional support for any proposed sanctions according to President Basescu. Romania has been among the most vigorous advocates of Western sanctions against Moscow. Not only did Romania approve of the sanctions, it has also recommended, along with Poland and the United Kingdom, additional sanctions at EU summits in July and August 2014.<sup>75</sup>

The downing of Malaysian Airline flight MH17 surprised Romania, just as it did all of the international community. President Basescu declared himself “appalled” by the tragic event that occurred in Ukrainian airspace. Moreover, the Romanian president criticized the EU as being too weak and too slow in imposing sanctions on Russia to deter further European encroachment. Basescu also criticized the Western way of handling sanctions against Russia as “with kid gloves,” attributing the EU's response as being too motivated by economic relationships. He stated: “one country has a big investment, [the] other has to deliver sophisticated equipment, and another is natural gas dependent.” More important, he predicted that “today is Ukraine, then the Baltics borders are reached, then Poland and then Romania.”<sup>76</sup> The EU approach led Romania to look to NATO as the better response to Russian aggression.

The election of a new Romanian presidential administration improved relations with Ukraine. During Kyiv's 2015 visit, the new President, Klaus Iohannis, restated Romanian support of sanctions until the complete fulfillment of the Minsk agreements.<sup>77</sup> In addition, Romanian Foreign Affairs Minister

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<sup>75</sup> Marian Chiriac, “Romania Backs EU Sanctions against Russia,” *BalkanInsight*, March 18, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/tense-situation-in-ukraine-worries-neighboring-romania>.

<sup>76</sup> Radu Marinas, “Romania's Basescu Slams EU for Soft Putin Stance,” *Reuters*, July 21, 2014, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-romania-idUSKBN0FQ1W320140721>.

<sup>77</sup> “Poroshenko-Iohannis Meeting In Kiev: Romania Reiterates Its Firm Support for Ukraine's Rapprochement with the European Union,” *Nineoclock*, March 17, 2015, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.nineoclock.ro/poroshenko-iohannis-meeting-in-kiev-romania-reiterates-its-firm-support-for-ukraines-rapprochement-with-the-european-union/>.

Bogdan Aurescu reiterated Romania's support at the 2015 NATO-Ukraine Committee by highlighting that "You can count on Romania."<sup>78</sup>

In the context of Romanian-Russian relations, Romania's reaction to the Ukrainian crisis is not surprising. A vocal supporter of regional rapprochement with the West, Romania favors a tougher response towards Russia than other EU members. Although it continues to import some gas from Russia, Romania is less energy dependent on Russia than other European states. In addition to its current gas resources, Romania recently discovered new reserves on the shelf of the Black Sea. According to official estimates, these new reserves will enable the country to be fully energy-independent by 2019 and become a net exporter.<sup>79</sup>

Historically, relations between Romania and Russia have been rocky. In 1816, Romania lost Bessarabia (Moldova) to Russia after the Russian-Turkish War. The region exchanged lands between the two countries until 1944, when it became part of the USSR. The attempted secession of Transnistria from Moldova in 1992 and the subsequent war prevented the Romania-Moldova unification. Russian troops have been garrisoned in Transnistria ever since, despite the Istanbul Accord that stipulates their withdrawal.<sup>80</sup> Romania, alongside other European countries, has condemned Russia for its continued support of the Transnistrian separatists and its military presence there. Another significant tension in relations with Russia is the Romanian gold reserve. Russia has long refused to return 120 tons of gold that Romania evacuated there in 1916 when faced with an invasion by Germany.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> "Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu Attends Meeting of NATO-Ukraine Committee," *Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release*, May 13, 2015, accessed March 8, 2016, <http://www.mae.ro/en/node/32033>.

<sup>79</sup> Chi-Kong Chyong and Vessela Tcherneva, "Europe's vulnerability on Russian gas," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, March 17, 2015, accessed April 2, 2016, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_europes\\_vulnerability\\_on\\_russian\\_gas](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_europes_vulnerability_on_russian_gas).

<sup>80</sup> "Istanbul Document 1999," *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe-Documents by the OSCE Decision-Making Bodies*, November 19, 1999, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.osce.org/mc/39569?download=true>.

<sup>81</sup> Virginia Mircea, "Who doesn't want our Treasure back from Russia?," *Cadran Politic*, May 19, 2007, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.cadranpolitic.ro/?p=1299>.

Since its language, unlike others in Eastern Europe, is a Latin language, Romania shares more cultural attributes with European countries than Slavic Russia. Romanians enjoy a high degree of immunity to the Russian government's narrative because they do not understand the Russian-speaking media. The complicated historical relationship and the country's non-Slavic origins have contributed to a general distrust of Russia. A recent survey of Romanians' attitudes toward other countries places Russia as the least liked, with only thirty-seven percent expressing a positive feeling toward it.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, since March 2014, the Russian media intensified their spinning of news about Romanian leaders and events through the new Voice of Russia radio and the Russia Today website. Despite Russia's efforts to influence public opinion and decision makers in Romania, there is no major division of attitudes since Romanians and politicians have reacted in the same way to events in Ukraine.

Russia's reactions to Romania's position in the Ukrainian crisis were also negative. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sergey Lavrov, has criticized the "anti-Russian" attitude of Romania's leadership. After the election of Iohannis in November 2014, a Russian statement expressed hope that he would not adopt the attitude of his predecessor, Traian Basescu, but instead put relations between the two countries back on a friendlier track.<sup>83</sup>

From an economic perspective, Romania is not seriously concerned that sanctions would deprive its businesses of a share of the Russian market since trade relations between the two countries plummeted in the 1990s. Trade with Russia account for only 3.4 percent of Romania's overall economic exchanges.<sup>84</sup> The EU is Romania's main trading partner, accounting for over seventy percent of Romanian trade.

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<sup>82</sup> "Ce Țări Simpatizează și Antipatizează Românii. Germania și Rusia, la Extreme," *Romanian INSCOP Survey*, July 30, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.inscop.ro/31-iulie-2014-dcnews-sondaj-inscop-ce-tari-simpatizeaza-si-antipatizeaza-romanii-germania-si-rusia-la-extreme/>.

<sup>83</sup> "Putin Congratulates Iohannis; Launches Appeal for 'Constructive' Russian-Romanian Relations," *Business Review*, November 30, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.business-review.eu/featured/putin-congratulates-iohannis-launches-appeal-for-constructive-russian-romanian-relations-73918>.

<sup>84</sup> "Russian-Romanian Economic relations," *Russian Federation Embassy in Romania Official Site*, last modified 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, [http://romania.mid.ru/ro\\_RO/web/romania\\_ro/economia](http://romania.mid.ru/ro_RO/web/romania_ro/economia).

However, the Romanian authorities are increasingly wary of the infiltration of Russian capital in the economy and the risk of destabilization. Official figures list Russia as an unimportant foreign investor, with total investments officially under \$100 million. However, Russian capital also enters the economy through third countries or from offshore locations. Romania's main foreign investors are the Netherlands and Austria, two of the most transited countries by Russian capital.<sup>85</sup>

Approached through the lenses of this monograph's methodology, Romania highlights the impact of geographic proximity and the relative economic independence in a state's behavior towards a crisis. Bucharest is geographically proximate to the resurgent Kremlin and the main short-term threat is the conflict spillover. Romania is not a supporter of direct confrontation due to its proximity to Russia. Accordingly, in a most dangerous scenario, Romania will be an engagement area for the West and East. However, in the long term, the regional and Black Sea balance of power seems to be the main Romanian security challenges.

Culturally, Romania, Ukraine, and Russia share the Orthodox religion. On the other hand, Romania transitioned to Western civilization according to Samuel Huntington's theory and embraced Western values and principles, self-reformed, and eventually integrated into the Western world. However, Romania's position as a fault line between empires has played an important role in shaping the Romanian strategic culture. According to the Romanian scholar Raluca-Oana Csernatoni, the Romanian strategic culture consists of adaptation to change as a habitual disposition embodied by security reasons as a survival tool.<sup>86</sup> Facing the Russian expansionist culture, bilateral ties has always been a love-hate relationship based on overlapping or conflicting interests.

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<sup>85</sup> "Romania's Direct investment - Directional Principle," *National Bank of Romania Official Site*, last modified February 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.bnr.ro/Direct-investment---directional-principle-12352.aspx>.

<sup>86</sup> Raluca-Oana Csernatoni, "A Bourdieusean Analysis of a Practice-Oriented Strategic Culture. The Romanian Security and Defence Field," *Institutul Roman pentru Evaluare si Strategie*, 2010, accessed April 2, 2016, <https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/272c835d-4be6-4189-bc65-aac55342ac23.pdf>.

Nevertheless, the communist past still haunts Romania's collective memory. Many Romanians do not trust Russia and have enmity for it. The former dictatorial regime and the communist era led Romania to embrace the West at all costs in order to support its economic and security interests. Lacking a large Russian ethnicity in Romania, Russia has limited options to leverage its interests within this country. Using a Latin language and alphabet, Russian information operations do not exploit Romanians.

To sum up, Romania's behavior towards the Ukrainian crisis aligns with the Western approach. The difference is Romania's harsher public rhetoric and support for harder sanctions. Concerned with the spillover of the crisis and its proximity, Romanian was a vocal supporter for the international assistance in de-escalating the conflict and avoiding direct confrontation. Negative historical experiences also drive Romanians towards the West. Due to its military affiliation and shared Western values, Romanian behavior materialized in a hawkish stance towards Russia's actions in Ukraine. In terms of national interests, Romania relies on NATO to secure its interests in the Black Sea region and implores the EU to support the economic integration of Moldova.

### **France Case Study**

France is one of the top European powers. According to the latest ranking by *US News*, in partnership with Brand Asset Valuator Consulting and Wharton, France is the sixth overall powerful country in the world. In terms of military power, it has an independent and expeditionary military.<sup>87</sup> Possessing the third greatest amount of nuclear weapons, France is the European state with the most potential to balance Russia.<sup>88</sup> France is also a founding member of the EU and NATO, and a member of the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

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<sup>87</sup> "Global Power Ranking," *U.S. News in partnership with BAV Consulting and Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania*, January 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/power-rankings>.

<sup>88</sup> "World Nuclear Forces," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's 2015 Yearbook*, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2015/11>.

A tepid supporter of the EaP, France has pursued a policy to shift the EU's focus towards the Mediterranean and Northern Africa regions where its interests reside. In 2008, France acknowledged that Sweden and Poland's EaP project was a counterbalance concept for President Nicolas Sarkozy's Union for the Mediterranean. France assessed the EaP as an aggressive response towards Russia for the Georgia War and subsequently played hardball to avoid jeopardizing its relations with Russia.<sup>89</sup>

Ukraine's decision to delay signing the EU's AA and the Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) on 21 November 2013 surprised the international community. On the French side, the Ukrainian withdrawal was a blessing in disguise. According to the French minister in charge of European affairs, Thierry Repentin, "President Viktor Yanukovich perhaps rendered a service both to the EU and to the Ukrainian population." Another French official, Elisabeth Guigou, the chairman of the Assembly's foreign affairs committee, argued that the EU's failure came as a result of the diplomatic mismanagement of relations with Russia, insisting that EU should not "welcome Ukraine as a member of the EU, even less in NATO."<sup>90</sup>

France has been an active participant in the Ukrainian crisis since the beginning of Euromaidan. Initially, French President Francois Hollande condemned the police actions towards demonstrators. Hollande called for the immediate end of violence and threatened targeted sanctions on those responsible for the deadly confrontation.<sup>91</sup> On 21 February 2014, through its foreign minister Laurent Fabius, France participated on the EU's crisis mediation team along with the German and Polish foreign ministers. The

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<sup>89</sup> Natalie Nougayrède, "France and the Eastern Partnership: The View from Paris," *European Council of Foreign Relations*, May 19, 2015, accessed April 2, 2016, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_france\\_and\\_the\\_eastern\\_partnership\\_the\\_view\\_from\\_paris3033](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_france_and_the_eastern_partnership_the_view_from_paris3033).

<sup>90</sup> "French Bash EU for Failed Ukraine Deal," *EurActiv*, January 13, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/french-bash-eu-for-failed-ukraine-deal/>.

<sup>91</sup> "France, Poland Seek Quick, Targeted EU Sanctions on Ukraine," *Reuters*, February 19, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-sanctions-hollande-idUSBREA1I0QI20140219>.



diplomatic effort led to an agreement for cessation of demonstrations and anticipated presidential elections for Ukraine.<sup>92</sup> The agreement failed on 22 February when President Yanukovich fled to Russia.

Anticipating the dangerous scenario for Crimea, France called for Ukraine's territorial integrity to be “absolutely respected” through the French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayraut, as unconventional forces increased their activity in Crimea and Russia mobilized troops near the Ukraine border.<sup>93</sup> In an attempt to deescalate the military intervention, Minister Fabius called for diplomacy either directly between the Russians and the Ukrainians or mediated by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the UN (the so-called Contact Group).<sup>94</sup> In addition, French President François Hollande implored Russian President Vladimir Putin to “avoid resorting to force.” To back up its demands, France suspended preparations for the forthcoming G8 summit, threatening Russia with diplomatic isolation.<sup>95</sup>

France, along with all Western community, lobbied for de-escalation and a new round of negotiations. On the other hand, France was firm regarding the Crimea's referendum reiterating through President Hollande that “the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine are non-negotiable.” Hollande assured Ukrainians that “the international community, Europe and France work to preserve the territorial integrity of Ukraine,” emphasizing the dangerous precedent of violating borders.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> “François Hollande Welcomes Ukraine Agreement,” *Embassy of France in London Official Site*, February 21, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.ambafrance-uk.org/French-and-German-leaders-call-for#ukraine-interview-given-laurent-fabius-1>.

<sup>93</sup> “France Calls for Ukraine's Integrity to Be Respected as Crimea Crisis Deepens,” *RFI*, March 1, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.english.rfi.fr/europe/20140301-france-calls-ukraines-integrity-be-respected-crimea-crisis-deepens>.

<sup>94</sup> “France Pressures Putin over Ukraine Military Intervention,” *RFI*, March 2, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.english.rfi.fr/europe/20140302-france-pressure-putin-over-ukraine-military-intervention>.

<sup>95</sup> “G7 Nations Jointly Condemn Russia, Halt G8 Preparations,” *CBC News*, March 2, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/ukraine-crisis-g7-jointly-condemns-russia-halts-g8-prep-1.2557174>.

<sup>96</sup> “France Says No Crimea Vote without Kiev Nod,” *The Local*, March 8, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.thelocal.fr/20140308/france-says-no-crimea-vote-without-ukraine-consent>.

France aligned with the Western community by not recognizing the Crimea referendum. Additionally, the Russian Unification treaty with Crimea received the same French approach as considering it illegal under international law. President Hollande condemned the decision and encouraged the European community to provide a strong and coordinated response.<sup>97</sup> Minister Fabius discussed for the first time the sensitive defense sector deal with Russia for the Mistral warships. The French official argued that the deal could be terminated as a part of the third level of sanctions. However, President Hollande finally committed to delivering the military vessels.<sup>98</sup>

The 2011 sale of two Mistral warships, valued at of \$1.7 billion, was already a deep source of concern for France's NATO and EU allies, coming only a few years after Russia's invasion of Georgia. France had come under pressure for the controversial warship deal. The international demands conflicted with the French domestic pressures due to the high amount of money and the number of jobs involved. Despite vocal diplomatic efforts, France's reluctance to use the sale as a bargaining chip casted doubt on French determination to force Russia's hand during the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>99</sup>

However, France backed sanctions against Russia on 17 March 2014 when the EU imposed the first travel bans and asset freezes against persons involved in actions against Ukraine's territorial integrity.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, France suspended most of its military cooperation with Russia.<sup>101</sup> The apparent

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<sup>97</sup> "Ukraine – Communiqué Issued by François Hollande, President of the Republic," *France Diplomatie*, March 18, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/ukraine/events/article/ukraine-communique-issued-by>.

<sup>98</sup> "Crimea: Hollande Wants Firm EU Retort to Russia," *The Local*, March 18, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.thelocal.fr/20140318/france-could-cancel-warship-deal-with-russia>.

<sup>99</sup> Mehdi Chebil, "Europe-France Will Not Halt Russian Warship Sale despite Ukraine Crisis," *France24*, March 6, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.france24.com/en/20140306-french-built-warship-destined-russia-crimea-crisis-mistral-test-run>.

<sup>100</sup> "EU Newsroom - EU Sanctions against Russia over Ukraine Crisis," *EU Newsroom*, February 14, 2012, accessed April 2, 2016, [http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu\\_sanctions/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/newsroom/highlights/special-coverage/eu_sanctions/index_en.htm).

<sup>101</sup> "Russia, France Close to Deal on Mistrals," *Reuters*, April 24, 2015, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-russia-mistrals-idUSKBN0NF1JW20150424>.

de-escalation deal reached in Geneva in April only lasted for a few days before military actions resumed. Furthermore, France maintained its support for sanctions on 12 May when the EU increased the coercive measures list raising pressure on and discussing the “triggers” for the next stage of sanctions, which would target individual businesses.<sup>102</sup> The EU was reluctant to impose economic sanctions on Russia because of their economic interdependence and heavy reliance on Russian gas. Hence, France refused to link the Mistral contract to the debate over tighter sanctions.<sup>103</sup> The French stance invited American concerns. US President Barack Obama recognized the impact of the deal on the French economy, but the Americans recommended to “press the pause button.”<sup>104</sup>

The downing of the Malaysian airplane MH17 on 17 July 2014 raised new questions in the Western world. The crash widened the gap of the already divided Western world. The American and British governments attempted to persuade other European leaders to impose a package of tougher sanctions. They accused France and Germany of being too soft on Putin. Singling out France, British Prime Minister David Cameron publicly suggested that President Hollande should suspend the delivery of the two Mistral warships. Despite the British call for an arms embargo, the French stuck with the deal and set a conditional delivery date for the second Mistral ship.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, the United States wanted Europe to adopt a stronger stance towards Russia due to its leverage with trade. The air disaster put the spotlight on the French, but France worried that the deal

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<sup>102</sup> “EU Punishes Russia, Adds More Names to Sanctions List,” *EurActiv*, May 13, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.euractiv.com/sections/global-europe/eu-punishes-russia-adds-more-names-sanctions-list-302078>.

<sup>103</sup> Gregory Viscusi and Helene Fouquet, “France Rejects Blocking Mistral Warship Sale to Russia,” *Bloomberg*, May 12, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-05-12/france-rejects-blocking-mistral-warship-sale-to-russia>.

<sup>104</sup> “Obama Warns France on Russia Mistral Ship Deal,” *BBC*, June 5, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27722256>.

<sup>105</sup> Oliver Wright and John Lichfield, “Malaysia Airlines Mh17 Crash: France and Germany Accused of Going Soft on Putin as Sanctions Talks Stall,” *The Independent*, July 21, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/malaysia-airlines-mh17-crash-france-and-germany-accused-of-going-soft-on-putin-as-sanctions-talks-9619934.html>.

cancellation could hamper Russian cooperation with the crash investigation. The French attitude after the MH17 crash increased international concerns that the Western approach may elevate economic rather than moral concerns.<sup>106</sup> France's training of Russian sailors also angered its Western partners, who warned that the delivery of ships would undermine their efforts to isolate Russia and condemn its annexation of Ukrainian territory.<sup>107</sup>

After months of aggressive Russian-backed actions in East Ukraine, France announced on 3 September 2014 that it would not deliver the first Mistral warship. This decision received laudatory statements from Western countries.<sup>108</sup> The French suspended the delivery but did not officially cancel the deal. After many mixed messages from Russia and France on the Mistral deal and following one year of diplomatic and economic sanctions, on 5 August 2015, President Hollande cancelled the Mistral deal. France conceded to allied pressure as the Ukraine crisis deepened and as the Russian role in the breakaway of Crimea became obvious.<sup>109</sup> To cut France's losses, the United States helped it sell the ships to Egypt. Nevertheless, France lost almost 250 million euros from the cancelled deal.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Paul J. Saunders, "The Real Ukraine Crisis Is Coming: The 'Day after' Dilemma," *The National Interest*, September 1, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-real-ukraine-crisis-coming-the-day-after-dilemma-11177>.

<sup>107</sup> "France-Russians Training on Mistral Warship 'Leave France'," *France24*, December 17, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.france24.com/en/20141217-russian-sailors-disputed-warship-mistral-leave-france-ukraine-nazaire>.

<sup>108</sup> Dan Lamothe, "France Backs off Sending Mistral Warship to Russia in \$1.7 Billion Deal," *The Washington Post*, September 3, 2014, accessed April 2, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/09/03/france-backs-off-sending-mistral-warship-to-russia-in-1-7-billion-deal/>.

<sup>109</sup> Pierre Tran, "Mistral Dispute with Russia Settled, France Eyes Exports," *Defense News*, August 9, 2015, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/naval/ships/2015/08/09/mistral-dispute-russia-settled-france-eyes-exports/31278439/>.

<sup>110</sup> Brendan Byrne, "Why Did France Cancel Mistral Deal with Russia?," *Value Walk*, September 30, 2015, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.valuwalk.com/2015/09/france-mistral-deal-with-russia-cancel/>.

Approached from the methodology of this monograph, France's actions during the Ukrainian crisis highlight all the variables. In terms of geographic proximity, Paris benefits from a comfortable distance to the conflict. The French approach of economic retaliation follows the ordinary way that influence sharply dissipates with distance (similar to a ripple effect). On the other hand, the crisis location in the neighborhood of the EU determines French behavior to be active in accordance with its leadership ambition within the EU.

France has often enjoyed a unique cultural-historical connectivity with Russia.<sup>111</sup> Franco-Russian relations included Ukraine, until 1991, as a default part of Russia either as Tsarist or Soviet Russia. The Franco-Russian relationship has a long zigzag history where these countries are allies or enemies, according to their interests.<sup>112</sup> These shifts have reflected the balance of power in Europe.

However, the recent historical Franco-Russian connectivity has come from France's sometimes antagonistic position towards the United States and NATO since 1966. Concerned about the American role in the European politics, Charles de Gaulle presented his vision in 1964 of a "Europe united from the Atlantic to Urals."<sup>113</sup> Charles de Gaulle continues to be the French leader most respected in Russian historiography due to his policy of "détente, entente and cooperation."<sup>114</sup> The Ukrainian crisis follows the Gaullist policy where each party uses the other in their own interests as balancing the United States in Europe and the German primacy in EU.

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<sup>111</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 22–49.

<sup>112</sup> Nikolas K. Gvosdev and Christopher Marsh, *Russian Foreign Policy: Interests, Vectors, and Sectors* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2013), 240.

<sup>113</sup> Yuri Dubinin, "About a 'Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals,'" *Russia in Global Affairs*, November 17, 2007, accessed April 2, 2016, [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n\\_9784](http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/n_9784).

<sup>114</sup> Andrew Monaghan, "The UK and Russia—Towards a Renewed Relationship," *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 130, July 1, 2013, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/pdfs/RAD-130.pdf>.

The French strategic culture draws on two distinct and conflicting traditions. The first one is their self-identification as “the country of human rights,” promoted through multilateralism and democracy. Second, France has usually presented itself as a self-reliant with an independent attitude. Their response to the Ukrainian crisis mirrors both traditions. A strong supporter of human rights during the Ukrainian crisis, France encouraged the Western multilateral approach towards Russia through diplomacy and negotiation. Nevertheless, the Mistral deal revealed that France would embrace pragmatic solutions to crises based on changing circumstances. This dual approach follows its main political objectives of population safety, territorial integrity, world affairs’ responsibilities, and promotion of the liberal democratic values.<sup>115</sup>

Conversely, France and Russia differ in many respects. France is an old democracy, a leading European Union state, a NATO member, and an independent nuclear power with relative world outreach. Russia uses the rhetoric of sovereign democracy to cloak its authoritarian leadership tendencies. Its strengths lay in the natural richness of raw materials and its military capabilities. However, mutual benefits seem to be derived from the power status in regional and world affairs. In pursuing its interests, France kept up the tradition of seeking a special relationship with Moscow in order to “balance East and West” and gain more authority within Europe. The Franco-Russian relations cemented their national interests and preferences in several treaties and multiple high-level bilateral meetings, culminating with a strong friendship of different presidents. Applying a business first policy, France has tried to balance the growing German relations with Russia. Hence, the Russians exploit the cleavage of European powers and applies a divide and rule strategy based on bilateral relationships. Overall, the economic interests have primacy in their relations as military cooperation continues despite competition in defense and atomic energy markets. Other similarities between the two countries include the common vision of a multipolar

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<sup>115</sup> “French White Paper on Defence and National Security 2013,” *Permanent Representation of France to NATO Official Site*, last modified July 16, 2007, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.rpfrance-otan.org/White-Paper-on-defence-and>.

world, the uneasiness with the United States' European influence, and their lack of engagement with the East European states.<sup>116</sup>

As for economic interdependence, in 2014, France was the third-largest European supplier of Russian imports behind Germany and Italy. France's trade balance with Russia is in deficit due to the large share of oil and refined petroleum products that it imports from Russia. Russia was one of the top three recipients of French foreign development investment in 2013. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian crisis has made the bilateral trade relationship unpredictable. The sanctions against Russia have a direct impact on French companies involved in Russian defense, financial, and energy sectors, as well as an indirect effect in postponement of investment decisions. More, the Russian retaliatory measures caused an additional decrease in French agricultural and food products to Russia.<sup>117</sup>

The French behavior towards the Ukrainian crisis was thus a delicate balancing act. Surprised and dismayed by the Russian intervention in Crimea and East Ukraine, France preferred accommodating and appeasing Russia in order to protect its economic interests. Buffered by a comfortable distance to the crisis location, Paris steered a middle course between conflict-averse Germany and hawkish Eastern countries such as Romania. The French approach to East Europe has often overlapped with Russian interests. Ukraine has often been a lower priority for France compared with its Russian diplomatic relationship. Along with most of the Western EU members, France faced the same dilemma in dealing with the Ukrainian crisis. When it comes to coercing Russia, France's options are limited due to the economic interdependence. Overall, the French behavior emphasizes the economic implications for an appeasement stance rather than a coercive posture or confrontational attitude.

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<sup>116</sup> "Russia Borrowed NGOs Law from Foreign Legal Practices," *Russia Today*, April 2, 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <https://www.rt.com/politics/official-word/medvedev-interview-french-media-620/>.

<sup>117</sup> "Russia," *French Ministry of Economy and Industry Official Site*, March 18, 2016, accessed April 2, 2016, <http://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/pays/russie>.

## The United States Case Study

According to American journalist Jeffrey Goldberg's analysis of the so-called "Obama Doctrine," the US president is a self-described realist who believes that the United States cannot solve all of the world's problems. In addition, the US president embraces the internationalist idea of supporting multilateral organizations and international norms. Furthermore, President Obama shared his idealist beliefs that the United States "should be promoting values, like democracy and human rights and norms and values" in order to "make the world a better place." According to the US president, the burden of security of the liberal international order belongs to more than just the United States. The current US foreign policy favors diplomacy over coercion and brute force options. This US polyvalent approach was reflected in the Ukraine's crisis approach.<sup>118</sup>

The United States immediately offered strong support for the pro-West forces in Ukraine.<sup>119</sup> However, the United States backed away from their 2008 commitment of support for Ukraine's NATO membership because of its fragile democratic progress after the Orange Revolution.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, at the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, the US "reset" policy with Russia was still in place. Pragmatic management of US-Russian relations initially drove the United States to relax the strained ties after the Libya campaign, President Putin re-election, Russian human rights violations, and the Syrian civil war.

The United States joined European criticism of the Ukrainian decision to delay signing of the AA and DCFTA with the EU in November 2013.<sup>121</sup> The US perception was that Ukraine's leadership missed

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<sup>118</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic*, March 10, 2016, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

<sup>119</sup> "Top U.S. Official Visits Protesters in Kiev as Obama Administration Ups Pressure on Ukraine President Yanukovich," *CBS News*, December 11, 2013, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-victoria-nuland-wades-into-ukraine-turmoil-over-yanukovich/>.

<sup>120</sup> Grigoriy M. Perepelytsia, "NATO and Ukraine: At the Crossroads," *NATO Review*, 2007, accessed April 17, 2016, [http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/partnerships\\_old\\_new/NATO\\_Ukraine/EN/index.htm](http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2007/partnerships_old_new/NATO_Ukraine/EN/index.htm).

<sup>121</sup> "Ukraine's Decision on Association with the EU," *US Department of State Press Release*, November 21, 2013, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/11/217928.htm>.



an historic opportunity to cement a European future for its people. The subsequent democratic demonstrations in Kyiv piqued American interest and raised concerns of violent reprisals from the Ukrainian authorities.<sup>122</sup> The violent turn of the demonstrations shifted the international community's focus from Sochi's Winter Olympic Games to the crisis in Ukraine.

On 21 February 2014, President Obama called Russian President Putin to discuss the EU negotiated political agreement regarding Ukraine's future reforms, emphasizing the need to refrain violence.<sup>123</sup> The Ukrainian president's flight to Russia and the recall of the Russian ambassador on the next day concerned the United States. American statements demanded Russian support and respect for Ukraine's "sovereignty, territorial integrity and democratic freedom."<sup>124</sup> On the other side, Russians interpreted the Ukrainian situation as a coup d'état performed by the Western secret services and a betrayal of the February agreement.<sup>125</sup> President Obama's threats that "there will be costs" did not meet the desired intent to de-escalate the Ukrainian situation.<sup>126</sup>

Putin's annexation of Crimea caught the United States by surprise. According to a RAND study, the Crimean annexation was a remarkable Russian achievement performed by Russian unconventional

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<sup>122</sup> "Passage of Undemocratic Legislation in Ukraine," *US Department of State Press Release*, January 16, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2014/01/20140116291160.html#axzz2xClecEYP>.

<sup>123</sup> "Readout of President Obama's Call with President Putin," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, July 28, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/21/readout-president-obama-s-call-president-putin>.

<sup>124</sup> "Secretary Kerry Speaks with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov about the Situation in Ukraine," *Dipnote-US Department of State Official Blog*, February 23, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2014/02/23/secretary-kerry-speaks-russian-foreign-minister-lavrov-about-situation-ukraine>.

<sup>125</sup> "Transcript: Vladimir Putin's April 17 Q&A," *The Washington Post*, April 17, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/transcript-vladimir-putins-april-17-qanda/2014/04/17/ff77b4a2-c635-11e3-8b9a-8e0977a24aeb_story.html).

<sup>126</sup> David Beard, "'There Will Be Costs' – Text of Obama's Statement on Ukraine," *The Washington Post*, February 28, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2014/02/28/there-will-be-costs-text-of-obamas-statement-on-ukraine/>.

forces with swiftness, efficiency, and a minimum of bloodshed or loss of life. Given that such an operation was completed in only the two weeks, it is likely that contingency plans had been worked out well in advance.<sup>127</sup>

The Americans denounced the referendum in Crimea and declared it a violation of international law. Prior to the referendum, President Obama announced visa bans and asset freezes as sanctions “on individuals and entities responsible for violating the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.”<sup>128</sup> US Secretary of State John Kerry warned that “continued military escalation and provocation in Crimea or elsewhere in Ukraine, along with steps to annex Crimea to Russia would close any available space for diplomacy.”<sup>129</sup>

To bolster support for the Ukrainian cause, President Obama received new Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk at the White House. The US president praised Ukrainian courage and aspirations and assured Yatsenyuk that “you will have our strong support as you move forward during these difficult times.”<sup>130</sup> In a show of support, several American congressional representatives visited Ukraine.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Larrabee, 6.

<sup>128</sup> “Statement by the US President on Ukraine,” *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, March 6, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/06/statement-president-ukraine>.

<sup>129</sup> Arshad Mohammed and Roberta Rampton, “Kerry Urges Russia to Exercise Utmost Restraint in Ukraine’s Crimea,” *Reuters*, March 8, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-usa-idUSBREA270OZ20140308>.

<sup>130</sup> “Remarks by President Obama and Ukraine Prime Minister Yatsenyuk after Bilateral Meeting,” *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, July 28, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/12/remarks-president-obama-and-ukraine-prime-minister-yatsenyuk-after-bilat>.

<sup>131</sup> Brian Bonner, “McCain, Durbin Urge Obama to Send Weapons to Ukraine,” *KyivPost*, March 15, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.kyivpost.com/article/content/ukraine/mccain-durbin-say-they-will-urge-obama-to-send-weapons-to-ukraine-339474.html>.

The United States imposed its first sanctions on Russia on 17 March 2014.<sup>132</sup> The coercive measures did not stop the 18 March 2014 Reunification Treaty that Russia used to legalize the annexation of Crimea.<sup>133</sup> The Ukrainians responded through Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk, who invoked the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, whose main goal was the preservation of the Ukraine's territorial integrity at the expense of nuclear renunciation.<sup>134</sup>

The United States sought to reassure skeptical NATO allies in Eastern Europe about its commitment to their national security.<sup>135</sup> The US approach blended coercive and diplomatic measures to deter further Russian actions.<sup>136</sup> In addition, the United States suspended NATO-Russia and US-Russia's security and military cooperation. Furthermore, it suspended Russia from the G8 and boycotted the next planned G-8 summit in Sochi, Russia.<sup>137</sup> However, the US presidential administration dismissed the military option from the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> "Statement by the US President on Ukraine," *The White House Office of the Press Secretary*, March 17, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/17/statement-president-ukraine>.

<sup>133</sup> "Address by President of the Russian Federation on Reunification within the Russian Federation of the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol," *President of Russia Official Site*, March 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/6889#sel=29:3,29:3>.

<sup>134</sup> "Ukraine PM: Crimea Conflict Enters Military Stage," *Reuters*, March 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://news.yahoo.com/ukraine-pm-crimea-conflict-enters-military-stage-161432770--sector.html>.

<sup>135</sup> Aleksandar Vasovic and Maria Kiselyova, "Russian Forces Seize Two Ukrainian Bases in Crimea," *Reuters*, March 19, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-ukraine-crisis-idUSBREA2I0TR20140319>.

<sup>136</sup> "Blocking Property of Additional Persons Contributing to the Situation in Ukraine," *The US President Executive Order 13662*, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/ukraine\\_eo3.pdf](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/ukraine_eo3.pdf)

<sup>137</sup> Alison Smale and Michael D. Shear, "Russia Is Ousted from Group of 8 by U.S. and Allies," *Europe, The New York Times*, March 24, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/25/world/europe/obama-russia-crimea.html?_r=1).

<sup>138</sup> Michael D. Shear, "Obama Rules out Military Force over Ukraine," *The New York Times*, March 20, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/world/europe/obama-ukraine.html>.

The “Novorossiia” situation in Donetsk, Lugansk, Odessa, and Kharkov strengthened the US position that “Russia is a regional power that is threatening some of its immediate neighbors not out of strength, but out of weakness” and “these violations of international law indicates less influence, not more.” To clarify the American stance, President Obama warned that there would be substantial costs for Russia if it did not “act responsibly and show itself once again to be willing to abide by international norms.”<sup>139</sup>

On the economic side, the United States had been a strong supporter of Ukraine. According to the Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, Victoria Nuland, even before the crisis, the United States supported the Ukrainian democratic process with over \$5 billion.<sup>140</sup> During the crisis, the United States provided loan guarantees so that Ukraine could take steps to restore economic stability and return to growth and prosperity.<sup>141</sup> The United States also lobbied for financial assistance for Ukraine with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.<sup>142</sup> Currently, Ukraine is the beneficiary of a crisis support package to help it pursue political and economic reforms and strengthen the American-

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<sup>139</sup> “Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Rutte of the Netherlands,” *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, March 25, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/25/press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-rutte-netherlands>.

<sup>140</sup> “Victoria Nuland Remarks at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Conference,” *Department of State Press Release*, December 13, 2013, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/dec/218804.htm>.

<sup>141</sup> “Statement by the Press Secretary on Ukraine,” *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, April 1, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/01/statement-press-secretary-ukraine>.

<sup>142</sup> Ed O’Keefe, “Senate Ukraine Aid Bill Will Not Include IMF Changes,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2014/03/25/reid-considering-dropping-imf-language-from-ukraine-aid-bill/>.

Ukrainian partnership.<sup>143</sup> In addition, USAID devoted critical resources to Ukraine to mitigate the conflict's adverse consequences.<sup>144</sup>

Diplomatically, the United States spearheaded the effort to solve the Ukrainian crisis by meeting with Russia, Ukraine, and the EU.<sup>145</sup> President Obama cautiously welcomed the talks, describing the de-escalation attempts as a "glimmer of hope."<sup>146</sup> However, the Geneva agreement failed to end the military clashes in Eastern Ukraine. The United States then stiffened sanctions despite reluctance from some of the EU members.<sup>147</sup> To retaliate, Russia banned the sale of the rocket engines to the United States military.<sup>148</sup> The diplomatic effort passed from the United States to Europeans with the ceremonies commemorating the 70th anniversary of D-Day. This event led Germany, Russia, Ukraine, and France to establish the

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<sup>143</sup> "Fact Sheet: U.S. Crisis Support Package for Ukraine," *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, April 21, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/21/fact-sheet-us-crisis-support-package-ukraine>.

<sup>144</sup> "Ukraine," *USAID Official Site*, last modified April 12, 2016, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.usaid.gov/where-we-work/europe-and-eurasia/ukraine>.

<sup>145</sup> "Geneva Hosting Talks Next Week between US, Russia, EU, Ukraine to End Crisis," *Business Insider*, April 10, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.businessinsider.com/geneva-hosting-talks-next-week-between-us-russia-eu-ukraine-to-end-crisis-2014-4>.

<sup>146</sup> Julian Borger and Alec Luhn, "Ukraine Crisis: Geneva Talks Produce Agreement on Defusing Conflict," *The Guardian*, January 13, 2016, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/17/ukraine-crisis-agreement-us-russia-eu>.

<sup>147</sup> "Statement by the US Press Secretary on Ukraine," *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, April 28, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/28/statement-press-secretary-ukraine>.

<sup>148</sup> Douglas Messier, "Russian Rocket Engine Ban on US Military Launches Could Affect NASA Spaceflight," *Space*, May 14, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.space.com/25876-russia-rocket-engines-american-spaceflight.html>.

Normandy Format group as an attempt to de-escalate the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>149</sup> However, the United States continued bilateral efforts with Russia.<sup>150</sup>

The downing of the Malaysia Airline Flight MH17 surprised America as it did the rest of the world. In a public statement, President Obama accused Russia of violating Ukrainian sovereignty and supporting violent separatists.<sup>151</sup> The tragedy spurred the EU to support the harder United States stance.<sup>152</sup> The Minsk I cease-fire agreement on 5 September 2014 led to renewed hopes of peace. The agreement in theory constituted a bilateral cease-fire between the Ukrainian military and pro-Russian separatist forces. However, the absence of Western states from the negotiation table undermined the agreement. The cease-fire only lasted for one day before the shelling of Mariupol resumed.<sup>153</sup>

Following the Minsk I ceasefire, the US approach embraced military cooperation through US/NATO military exercises in Ukraine.<sup>154</sup> Additionally, Ukrainian President Poroshenko took an official visit to the United States and addressed a joint meeting of Congress, expressing gratitude and asking for

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<sup>149</sup> Simond de Galbert, "The Impact of the Normandy Format on the Conflict in Ukraine: Four Leaders, Three Cease-Fires, and Two Summits," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, October 23, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://csis.org/publication/impact-normandy-format-conflict-ukraine-four-leaders-three-cease-fires-and-two-summits>.

<sup>150</sup> "Telephone conversation with President of the United States Barack Obama," *President of Russia Official Site*, June 23, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/news/22535>.

<sup>151</sup> "Transcript: President Obama's July 18 Statement on Ukraine and Gaza," *Washington Post*, July 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-obamas-statement-on-ukraine-and-gaza/2014/07/18/a3224560-0e8c-11e4-8c9a-923ecc0c7d23\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/transcript-obamas-statement-on-ukraine-and-gaza/2014/07/18/a3224560-0e8c-11e4-8c9a-923ecc0c7d23_story.html).

<sup>152</sup> Terry Atlas and Jonathan Allen, "Obama Seen Gaining on Putin as U.S. Prods EU on Sanctions," *Bloomberg*, July 21, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-21/obama-seen-gaining-on-putin-as-u-s-prods-eu-on-sanctions>.

<sup>153</sup> "Ukraine Crisis: Shelling near Mariupol Threatens Truce," *BBC*, September 7, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29097836>.

<sup>154</sup> "US Leading Peacekeeping Drill in Western Ukraine," *Voice of America*, September 15, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-to-lead-peacekeeping-exercises-in-ukraine/2449857.html>.

additional assistance, including lethal weapons.<sup>155</sup> President Obama announced a new package of assistance totaling \$53 million for Ukraine.<sup>156</sup> However, the United States communicated a potential conciliatory stance indicating that it would lift sanctions if Russia chose diplomacy and peace.<sup>157</sup> The US Congress unanimously issued the Ukraine Freedom Support Act in December 2014 in response to what Tennessee Senator Bob Corker called “the hesitant US response to Russia’s continued invasion to Ukraine.”<sup>158</sup> Despite the lethal military aid authorization and support of further sanctions, President Obama stayed committed to “promote a diplomatic solution that provides a lasting resolution to the conflict and helps to promote growth and stability in Ukraine and regionally, including in Russia.”<sup>159</sup>

On 11 February 2015, Ukraine, Russia, France, and Germany agreed to a package of measures, known as the Minsk II agreement, to alleviate the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine. Overseen by the OSCE, the agreement intended to revive the Minsk I Protocol. Hence, beginning on 15 February 2015, the agreement committed the parties to implement a plan for a total ceasefire, as well as develop a

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<sup>155</sup> “Remarks by Ukrainian President Poroshenko to the US Congress,” *Council of Foreign Relations*, September 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/ukraine/remarks-ukrainian-president-poroshenko-us-congress/p33470>.

<sup>156</sup> “Fact Sheet: U.S. Support for Ukraine,” *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, September 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/18/fact-sheet-us-support-ukraine>.

<sup>157</sup> “Remarks by President Obama in Address to the United Nations General Assembly,” *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, September 24, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/24/remarks-president-obama-address-united-nations-general-assembly>.

<sup>158</sup> “US Congress Passes Russia Sanctions, Arms for Ukraine,” *AFP*, December 14, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/us-congress-passes-russia-sanctions-arms-ukraine-054621335.html?ref=gs>.

<sup>159</sup> “Statement by the US President on the Ukraine Freedom Support Act,” *The White House-Office of the Press Secretary*, December 18, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/18/statement-president-ukraine-freedom-support-act>.

roadmap that addressed broader political concerns by the end of 2015. The United States supported the Minsk II cease-fire agreement.<sup>160</sup>

Hostilities in Ukraine resumed and led to a stiffer US reaction. The NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, US Air Force General Philip Breedlove, described Russia aggression as the main threat to the Atlantic alliance.<sup>161</sup> To counter the political pressure for additional lethal aid to Ukraine, the Obama administration imposed new sanctions and non-lethal assistance to Kyiv, attempting to avoid further escalation of the Ukrainian crisis.<sup>162</sup> In addition, the administration approved increased military cooperation and training with the Ukrainian army.<sup>163</sup> However, the US focus has been on the implementation of the cease-fire agreement since Minsk II. The political dialogue continued and the US-Russian relations eased with high-level meetings between Secretary of State Kerry and President Putin and intensified engagements through Victoria Nuland, the US Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs.<sup>164</sup>

Approached through the lens of this monograph's methodology, the United States' response to the Ukrainian crisis highlights the significance of national interests and preferences in a state's behavior during a crisis. Regarding the variable of geographic proximity, the United States's geography presents a

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<sup>160</sup> "Ukraine Crisis: Leaders Agree Peace Roadmap," *BBC*, February 12, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31435812>.

<sup>161</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "NATO Commander Says He Sees Potent Threat from Russia," *The New York Times*, April 3, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/world/europe/nato-general-says-russian-force-poised-to-invade-ukraine.html>.

<sup>162</sup> Peter Baker, "U.S. to Give Ukraine's Military an Additional \$75 Million in Nonlethal Aid," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/us/us-imposes-sanctions-on-pro-russian-separatists-in-ukraine.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/12/us/us-imposes-sanctions-on-pro-russian-separatists-in-ukraine.html?_r=0).

<sup>163</sup> Alec Luhn, "US Paratroopers Begin Training Ukraine National Guard Units," *The Guardian*, April 20, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/20/us-paratroopers-begin-training-national-guard-units-in-ukraine>.

<sup>164</sup> "Nuland Says Minsk Being Violated Daily," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, May 18, 2015, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-nuland-visit-improving-ties/27022774.html>.



remarkably favorable position because the oceans act as security buffer zones. Additionally, the American military complex can overcome the tyranny of distance no matter where threats appear. The distance does not diminish the US operational reach. Hence, as the self-appointed “Leader of the Free World” and the world’s most powerful state, the United States is the only state with capabilities to preserve the international rule of law and to apply the “responsibility to protect” policy.<sup>165</sup> On the other hand, the location of the Ukrainian crisis provides Russia with a built in advantage. However, the context of Ukrainian crisis and current US foreign policy have prevented the United States from assembling an expeditionary force to push Russians out of Crimea and East Ukraine (as it did during the 1991 liberation of Kuwait).

Culturally, the two countries belong to different civilizations according to Huntington’s theory. The United States is the leader of Western civilization with a strong Protestant heritage. Geographic security and exceptionalism shaped the American strategic culture as nation. According to Professor Thomas G. Mahnken, the American strategic culture emphasizes liberal idealism and views war as a discontinuation of policy, reversing the Clausewitz’s famous formulation.<sup>166</sup> On the other side, according German scholar Norbert Eitelhuber, the nature of Russia’s strategic culture, as an Orthodox civilization, is its propensity to use force to achieve strategic objectives based on strong nationalist beliefs and an obsessive perception of threats from the West.<sup>167</sup> Overall, the cultural differences between the two

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<sup>165</sup> Madeleine K Albright and Richard S Williamson, “The United States and R2P from Words to Action,” *The US Institute for Peace, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Brookings Institution*, 2013, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/07/23-united-states-responsibility-protect-albright-williamson/23-united-states-responsibility-protect-albright-williamson.pdf>.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas G. Mahnken, “United States Strategic Culture,” *Defense Threat Reduction Agency Advanced Systems and Concepts Office*, November 13, 2006, accessed April 17, 2016, <https://fas.org/irp/agency/dod/dtra/us.pdf>.

<sup>167</sup> Norbert Eitelhuber, “The Russian Bear: Russian Strategic Culture and What It Implies for the West,” *PfP Consortium Quarterly Journal Winter 2009*, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=122271>.

countries are significant and resonated in history through the ideology of capitalism and communism, democracy and autocracy, and different approaches for power.

US-Russian economic ties are relatively limited. Russia accounts for a small portion of US international economic activity. In 2013, just 0.71% of US exports went to Russia and 1.19% of U.S. imports came from Russia. In 2012, less than 0.5% of US overseas investment was in Russia. Likewise, the United States accounts for a relatively small share of Russia's overall trade and inflows of investment. In 2013, Russia imported 5.6% of its goods from the United States and exported 2.7% of its goods to the United States. Of the nearly \$500 billion in foreign direct investment in Russia at the end of 2012, less than 1% was from the United States. However, several large US companies started economic ventures in Russia, including ExxonMobil, PepsiCo, Ford Motor Co, General Electric, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Visa, and MasterCard.<sup>168</sup> These indicators suggest that sanctions on Russia could have a relatively small effect for both countries. According to the Danish Institute for International Studies, the US-Russia economic interdependence is insignificant. However, sanctions could disrupt specific economic activities at the business level, imposing economic costs on specific American and Russian industries and firms. Compared to the EU, the United States is not economically dependent on Russia, which might explain the eagerness and steadiness of US support for sanctions. The assumed problem is the temptation for the United States to fall back in its “reset” policy as a tradeoff to address other issues outside Europe where Russia has leverage.<sup>169</sup>

Regarding national interests and preferences, the United States exemplifies Professor Walt's paradox. On one hand, US primacy allows and obliges it, as the global power, to intervene worldwide in disputes without jeopardizing its own security. On the other hand, many of the international issues are of secondary importance and not judged as worth “American risk, blood or treasure.” According to Walt,

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<sup>168</sup> Rebecca M. Nelson, “U.S.-Russia Economic Relations,” *CRS Insights*, No. IN10119, July 29, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/230150.pdf>.

<sup>169</sup> Henrik Boesen Lindbo Larsen, *Great Power Politics and the Ukrainian Crisis - NATO, EU and Russia after 2014* (Report 2014:18, Copenhagen: DIIS, Danish Institute for International Studies, 2014), 22-25.

Washington has a tendency to draw redlines and issue demands convinced that everybody will concede. However, the real world presents a different perspective. Russia, as a weaker state, is more willing to accept risks and larger costs to preserve its national interests in Ukraine. Furthermore, considering the Western military and economic organizations' eastward, Russia fears the West is attempting to pull Ukraine from its sphere of influence.<sup>170</sup>

Ukraine is not a vital American national security interest despite the financial investment in the democratic Ukrainian process.<sup>171</sup> Professor Walt's supporting arguments include the minimum trade level, the high Russian leverage, the systemic corruption, and the proximity disadvantage. However, the US public still prefers retaliatory actions towards the traditional Cold War adversary.<sup>172</sup> Conversely, the former US ambassador in Ukraine, Steven Pifer, insists on the importance of Ukraine to the United States. According to the diplomat, Ukraine has been a good US partner since its independence by giving up its nuclear arsenal and highly-enriched uranium stocks, supporting the US policy of non-proliferation, and providing troops in wars against terrorism. In addition, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum committed the United States to support Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Furthermore, he believes the United States should intervene and not allow Russian actions to create a dangerous precedent in European post-World War II order.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "No contest," *Foreign Policy*, March 4, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/03/04/no-contest/>.

<sup>171</sup> "Victoria Nuland Remarks at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation Conference," *Department of State Press Release*, December 13, 2013, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/rm/2013/dec/218804.htm>.

<sup>172</sup> "Russia's Global Image Negative amid Crisis in Ukraine," *PEW Survey*, July 9, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/09/russias-global-image-negative-amid-crisis-in-ukraine/>.

<sup>173</sup> Steven Pifer, "Ukraine, Russia and the U.S. Policy Response," *Brookings Institution*, June 5, 2014, accessed April 17, 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/testimony/2014/06/05-ukraine-russia-us-policy-response-pifer>.

The United States' behavior towards the Ukrainian crisis emphasized national interests as a priority in a state's foreign policy.<sup>174</sup> With different political aims, the Obama administration highlighted the "reset" policy towards Russia and "Asia-Pacific pivot" at the expense of Europe. Under the US domestic pressure to pursue a harsher posture towards Russia, President Obama avoided a confrontational stance and embraced a diplomatic posture based on coercive measures. This approach departed from the prior presidential administrations' preference to use military force. The US behavior resulted from its national interests. The question is whether Washington will be able to resist the temptation to fall back on its reset policy towards Russia using Ukraine as a bargaining chip to address other global security issues outside Europe, notably Syria and Iran, where Washington remains dependent on Moscow's cooperation and its interests are more significant.

### **Conclusions**

Understanding states behavior during a crisis obviously requires taking into account many other variables. However, through the lens of geographical proximity, the cultural-historical connectivity, the economic interdependence, and the national interests/preference, the state's behavior suggests a level of predictability. Accordingly, states neighboring the crisis have a higher tendency for intervention and support of a timely resolution, even if it involves military confrontation. In addition, the more globalized and economically integrated a state is with countries involved in a crisis, the lower the likelihood of an active stance and the higher the likelihood of accommodation or negotiation. Furthermore, greater historic ties and cultural similarities lead to a greater chance to pursue a cooperative engagement and avoid direct confrontation. Finally, the greater the interests and preferences to a particular state actor results in a higher priority and commitment to solving the conflict. Despite sharing the same democratic and liberal values and principle, states behave differently during a crisis as a function of multiple variables and their differing degree of importance in national strategies.

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<sup>174</sup> Larsen, 25.

Sharing a border with Ukraine, Romania provides the best example for geographic proximity's significance. Concerned with crisis spillover, Romania has been a vocal supporter for international assistance to de-escalate the conflict and avoid brute force confrontation. The cultural-historical connectivity and national preference revealed Romania's tendency towards a confrontational posture. Negative historical experiences with Russia influence Romanian adversarial relationship with Russia. Economically, limited trade with Russia has allowed Romania to support stiffer economic sanctions. In terms of national interests, the Ukrainian crisis underlines the security national interests of Romania in the Black Sea region and in Moldova. The militarization of the Black Sea and the potential melting of the Transnistrian frozen conflict might jeopardize Romanian security strategy in the absence of strong NATO support. However, Romania's "hawkish" behavior towards the Ukraine's crisis emphasizes the security interests due to a crisis's proximity and the spillover potential. Romania aligns with the Western approach with the exception of harsher public rhetoric and a steady support for harder sanctions.

The French case study highlights the paramount roles of economic interests and interdependence in responding to a crisis. Due to its geographical proximity, France received pressure from the EU to actively mediate the Ukrainian crisis. France's cultural-historical connectivity with Russia influences French approach towards Russia. As for economic interdependence, France's case study reveals a reluctance to accept harsher international sanctions, as the Mistral deal demonstrated. The cancellation of the Mistral deal did not save face for the "country of the human rights." The "dovish" French approach reflects the economic national interests and their primacy during a prolonged European financial crisis. Performing a delicate balancing act, France preferred to appease Russia in order to protect its economic relationships.

The American case study underlines the importance of national interests in a state's behavior during a crisis. The limited trade between the United States and Russia paved the way for support of harsher economic sanctions. Despite the cautious US approach in the traditional Russian sphere of interests, the American global power status invited involvement. Additionally, the national antagonistic preference towards Russia bolstered US involvement in Ukrainian crisis. The United States' behavior

during the Ukrainian crisis highlighted the sensitivity of world affairs involving great powers. The diplomatically-balanced approach of the United States might also reflect the lack of national interests in Eastern Europe for non-NATO countries.

While each country's crisis response accentuates a different variable, all of the attributes contribute in different degrees of preponderance. Overall, the behavior towards the Ukrainian crisis revealed the divergent and diffused worldview of the international community. The West showed the Ukrainian support by focusing more on Russia than on Ukraine. Put it bluntly, the West sold hopes to the Ukrainian people regarding Russian aggression, which violated international laws. The liberal worldview, dominated by democracy promotion and economic integration, proved its limitations. At the same time, global institutions revealed their limited structural power and lack of credibility. International laws and norms lose their logic when the challenger is a great power.

The operational planner may use this research to shape thinking about the contemporary complex environment and anticipate how apparently similar political-cultural actors may react and approach a crisis in different ways. In addition, further research assessing state behavior during a crisis might consider other attributes such as capabilities, credibility, commitment, and communications. The appropriate assessment of the state's behavior provides an opportunity for the operational artist to anticipate the strategic context's dynamics and to mitigate uncertainty, misperception, and miscalculation in a complex adaptive system.

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